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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2218
INFO RUEHLL/CONTADORA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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~~SECRET~~ SAN SALVADOR 05360

EXDIS/CONTRA, FOR EXDIS CONTRA DISTRIBUTION
FROM HABIB

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, GT, XK
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HABIB'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CEREZO

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. AMBASSADOR PIEDRA AND I MET FOR AN HOUR ON APRIL 18 WITH PRESIDENT CEREZO. FOREIGN MINISTER QUINONES AND NSC STAFF MEMBER BURGHARDT ALSO PARTICIPATED. I EXPLAINED TO CEREZO THAT FOLLOWING THE CONTADORA MEETING IN PANAMA, WE WANTED TO REVIEW THE DIPLOMATIC SITUATION WITH THE CENTRAL AMERICANS AND THE CONTADORA COUNTRIES. I BRIEFLY EXPLAINED THE CONGRESSIONAL SITUATION ON CONTRA AID, NOTING THAT WE BELIEVE OUR PROPOSAL COULD WIN WHEN WE CAN OBTAIN A STRAIGHT VOTE.
3. CEREZO DISCUSSED PLANS FOR THE LATE MAY CENTRAL AMERICAN SUMMIT MEETING IN ESQUIPULAS. IN RESPONSE TO CALLS FROM DUARTE AND MONGE, CEREZO NOW HAS RETURNED TO HIS ORIGINAL POSITION OF INSISTING ON DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR A CENTRAL AMERICAN PARLIAMENT. THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES HAVE CONVINCED CEREZO THAT APPOINTING A PARLIAMENT AND THEN WAITING A YEAR FOR ELECTIONS WOULD NOT WORK. HE NOW WANTS TO SET UP THE ELECTION PROCEDURES AT THE START TO SEE WHETHER OR NOT THE SANDINISTAS ACCEPT. CEREZO COMMENTED THAT IF THE SANDINISTAS REFUSE, "YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GET WHATEVER AID YOU WANT OUT OF CONGRESS."
4. CEREZO AND QUINONES RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE THEME OF EXPOSING NICARAGUA'S REFUSAL TO DEMOCRATIZE OR TO SIGN A CONTADORA TREATY. THEY ASSERTED THAT THERE WAS CONTADORA AND SUPPORT GROUP AGREEMENT ("EVEN THE MEXICANS") ON THIS POINT. CEREZO SAID CONTADORA MINISTERS HAD COMMENTED THAT NICARAGUA'S ARGUMENT THAT IT COULD NOT SIGN A TREATY UNLESS THE U.S. SIMULTANEOUSLY STOPPED AID TO THE CONTRAS WAS NOT CREDIBLE SINCE MANAGUA HAD NOT RAISED IT DURING THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS. CEREZO THOUGHT MY LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN SLATTERY WOULD BE HELPFUL IN THIS EFFORT TO EXPOSE SANDINISTA OBDURACY.

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SECRET

86 0608447 SSO

PAGE 002
TOR: 190845Z APR 86NC 0608447
SAN SA 05360

5. I SAID I WAS GLAD WE COULD WORK IN TANDEM, BUT CAUTIONED THAT AN OLD COMMUNIST NEGOTIATING TACTIC IS TO TAKE A VERY INTRANSIGENT POSITION AND THEN MAKE MODEST CONCESSIONS HOPING TO GET THE OTHER SIDE TO CONCEDE ON MAJOR ISSUES. D'ESCOTO'S PERFORMANCE IN PANAMA MAY HAVE BEEN A CLEVER SHOW. I WARNED THAT INITIALING TREATY DRAFTS WHILE LEAVING MAJOR ISSUES UNRESOLVED WAS ANOTHER OLD COMMUNIST TRICK. THE GUATEMALANS THOUGHT NICARAGUA WAS SINCERELY INTRANSIGENT IN ITS REJECTION OF ARMS REDUCTION, BUT DID NOT RULE OUT THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE A TRICK UP THEIR SLEEVE. I STRESSED THE NEED FOR A TRULY SATISFACTORY TREATY, NOTING OUR CONCERN THAT THE PANAMA COMMUNIQUE HAD OMITTED EARLIER REFERENCE TO THE NEED TO CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS ON VERIFICATION. THE GUATEMALANS CONCURRED. IN A SEPARATE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH ARA/CEN OFFICER HAMILTON, VICE MINISTER VILLAGRAN RAISED THE VERIFICATION ISSUE AS ONE WHICH STILL REQUIRED NEGOTIATION. WE ALSO OUTLINED SOME OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN: THE LACK OF CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES FOR THE POLITICAL COMMITMENTS, A CONTADORA PROPOSAL ON ARMS REDUCTION WHICH WOULD EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATE NICARAGUAN COMPLIANCE WITH ANY OF THE SECURITY PROVISIONS, ETC. I PROPOSED TO PROVIDE THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF EACH OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES AT A LATER DATE AN OUTLINE OF OUR SPECIFIC CONCERNS IN EACH SECTION OF THE DRAFT ACTA. CEREZO ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSED THIS IDEA. I UNDERLINED THE NECESSITY THAT ANY CONTADORA AGREEMENT MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE, SIMULTANEOUS AND VERIFIABLE. NO PIECEMEAL IMPLEMENTATION WAS ACCEPTABLE.

6. QUINONES SAID THE CONTADORA GROUP STILL HAD NOT GIVEN THEM ANY DATE FOR RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE REMAINING ISSUES PRIOR TO JUNE 6. IN SOME WAYS IT WAS PROBABLE THAT THE JUNE 6 DATE WAS RECEDING. THE SALVADORANS WERE CONSIDERING THE IDEA OF THE FOUR DEMOCRACIES CONCLUDING THE TREATY DRAFTING AMONG THEMSELVES. CEREZO SAID THAT IF MANAGUA REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE OR SIGN, THAT MAY HAVE TO BE DONE; THAT DECISION COULD BE MADE LATER.

7. COMMENT: CEREZO'S LATEST REVERSAL ON THE ISSUE OF DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR A CENTRAL AMERICAN PARLIAMENT IS OBVIOUSLY A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT. AT A NUMBER OF POINTS HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE IS SENSITIVE TO THE VIEWS OF OTHER ACTORS -- ESPECIALLY THE VENEZUELAN, THE OTHER CENTRAL
S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 05360

EXDIS/CONTRA, FOR EXDIS CONTRA DISTRIBUTION

FROM HABIB

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, GT, XK

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HABIB'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CEREZO AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES, AND THE NICARAGUAN INTERNAL OPPOSITION PARTIES. THIS MEETING REINFORCED MY IMPRESSION THAT CEREZO FEELS DEEPLY THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN EACH CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY. HE COMMENTED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO REDUCE CONFLICT IN THE REGION WAS THROUGH DEMOCRACY AND IF THE SANDINISTAS DO NOT ACCEPT THAT, THEIR POSITION MUST BE SHOWN TO LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE. I BELIEVE MY WARNING ABOUT THE DANGER OF AGREEING TO AN UNSATISFACTORY AGREEMENT ON THE HOPE THE SANDINISTAS WOULD NOT SIGN MAY HAVE BEEN SALUTORY. BY THE END OF THE MEETING, QUINONES VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT SANDINISTA VIOLATION BETWEEN SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION -- A HEALTHY SIGN. THEY WERE ALSO RESPONSIVE TO THE NEED TO ASSURE THAT ANY AGREEMENT WOULD BE COMPREHENSIVE AND VERIFIABLE, WITH SIMULTANEOUS IMPLEMENTATION.

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